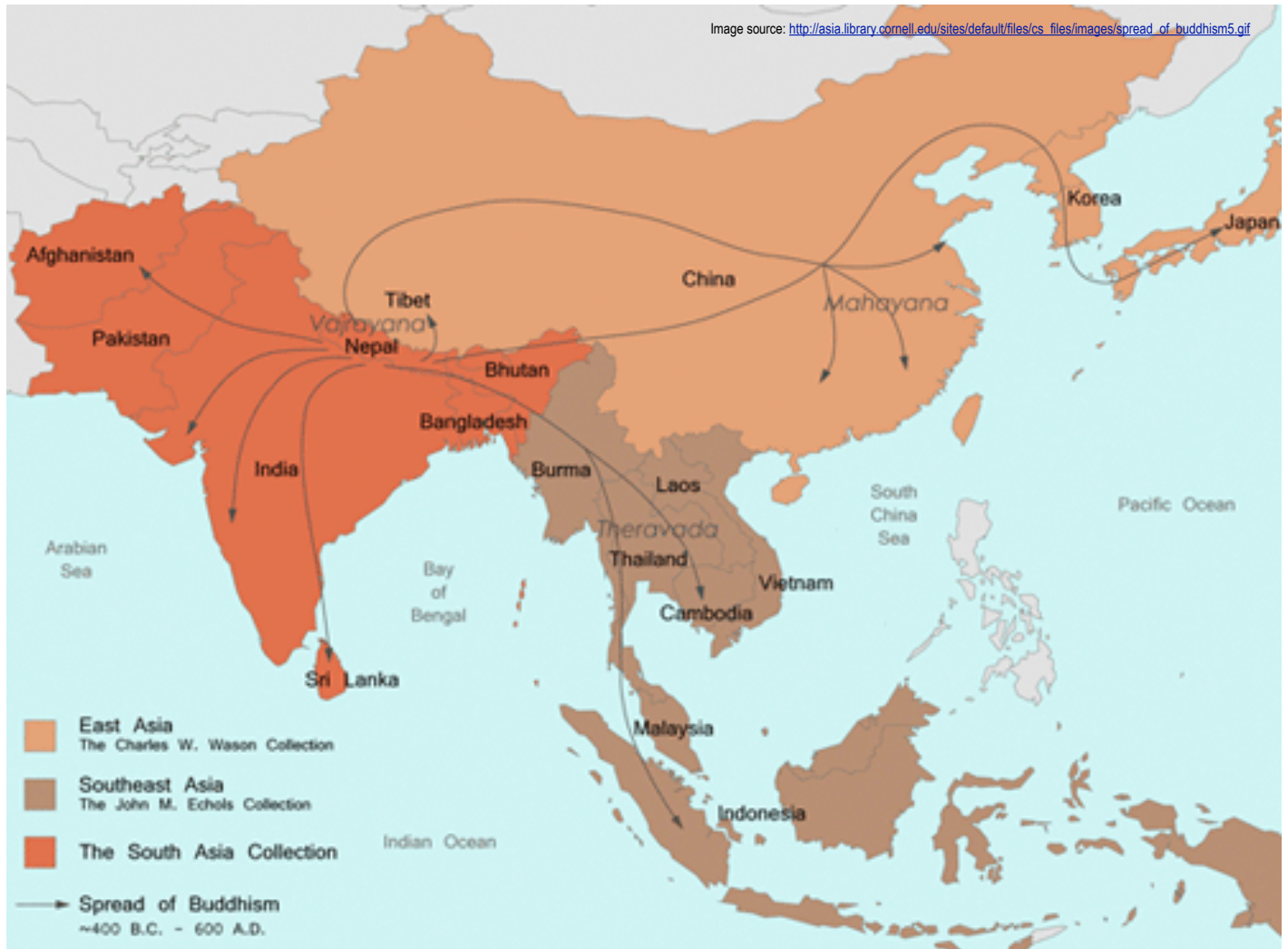


The Spread of Buddhism

Long ago, Buddhism began to spread southwards from its place of origin in northern India to what are now the countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Indo-China and other South East Asian countries. It also moved northwards into the Himalayan kingdoms (modern-day Bhutan and Nepal), Tibet, Mongolia and other parts of Central Asia, and also into what is now China, Korea and Japan.



Buddhist ideas were spread in part as merchants and traders traveled along the Silk Road. The “Silk Road” was not one road, but rather a network of roads passing through different regions. Furthermore, this was not a trade route that only traded silk. Many other commodities were traded, from gold and ivory to exotic animals and plants. Caravans heading **east** towards China carried gold and other precious metals, ivory, gems, and glass (which was not manufactured in China until the 5th century CD). Caravans headed **west** carried furs, ceramics, jade, bronze, lacquer and iron. Many of the goods were bartered for others along the way, and objects often changed hands several times. Merchants did not lead their caravans across the whole route; they would transport their goods between two commercial centers and would then sell them to other merchants. **Along with trade goods came new ideas, religions, medical knowledge, scientific and technological innovations.**